

PAOLOZZI AT NEW WORLDS (provisional title)

Acknowledgement

While *New Worlds* is used as a major source of information and insights, this book draws on many other sources - from magazine articles to books. The book I consulted most on the subject of the history and personnel of *New Worlds* is by Colin Greenland (Greenland C., (1983) *The Entropy Exhibition*, London, Routledge & Keegan Paul). An important source of facts about Paolozzi is a book by Robin Spencer (Spencer R., (2000) *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writing and Interviews*, Oxford, Oxford University Press). I am grateful to John Davey and Michael Butterworth for their advice and support and for the invaluable access they gave to their archives of magazines. I want to thank Christopher Finch, Charles Platt, John Clute, Michael Butterworth and Michael Moorcock who allowed me to reproduce the transcripts of our interviews in the Appendix. Thanks to the J.G. Ballard estate for granting permission to reproduce those of Ballard's works that appear in this book. My gratitude also to Toby Treves and the Paolozzi Foundation for their generosity and support over several years, and for helping to facilitate this publication. Robin Spencer has been peerless in his support and encouragement of this project. My thanks to my many colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University who supported this project in different ways, especially John Hyatt of MIRIAD. Lastly, thanks to Michael Moorcock for agreeing to write his foreword and for his co-operation and good humour throughout.

Introduction

This book developed out of an earlier concern with whether and how small magazines could enhance our understanding of the known contributions of artists.¹ Small magazines, those obscure, not-for-profit productions beloved by specialist readers, enjoyed a heyday in the early part of the 20th century, often as flagships for avant-garde movements. Legendary examples include *transition* (USA), *BLAST* (UK) and *La Plume* (France). One reason these are now of great interest is as test beds for innovative combinations of text and image that were produced in response to modernity. They are also becoming recognised as the precursors of today's web platforms that grow communities around marginal subject areas.

My original subject - and the subject of the present book - was the Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi (1925-2005), who was one of the founders of the radical Independent Group and a key figure of British Pop Art. While I was inspecting his scrapbooks of the 1950s and 1960s, I found a cover of an issue of the British science-fiction magazine *New Worlds*. Paolozzi was a collector of science-fiction ephemera that he integrated into his collages. I discovered that *New Worlds* emerged from the so-called 'Golden Age' of science fiction, when its readers were hard-core fans. But in the late 1960s the title unexpectedly transformed into something closer to the small magazine model. This was because it had recently acquired a new editor, Michael Moorcock, who had a strong sense of mission. This

¹ Brittain D., (2009) *The Jet Age Compendium: Paolozzi at Ambient*, London, Four Corners Books, London.

was two-fold: to save the title from financial collapse in the face of falling circulation figures, and to make *New Worlds* relevant for a new era in which science fiction literature (SF) was ripe for reinvention. Moorcock's risky strategy was to attempt to reform the genre so that it might compete with mainstream fiction. By the mid-1960s *New Worlds* was nurturing a 'new wave' of SF that departed from the old pulp genre in important ways, while keeping faith with its focus on man and technology. Part of the context for the emergence of this fiction was the advent of largely invisible technologies, computers and global communications, which promised to reconfigure the relationship between machine and man in ways that were yet to be understood. As in the modern era, when thinkers argued over the social effects - moral, psychological, political - of technological change, so in the Cold-War era. The speculations of writers as diverse as Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Ellul and William Burroughs became fertile ground for young *New Worlds* writers in search of a 'new literature for the Space Age'.

The most influential spokesman for this new movement was J.G. Ballard whose controversial novel, *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), is the best-known example of this literature. Ballard's ambitions for the new literature transcended what was permissible in commercial publishing and *New Worlds* became an outlet for his more experimental productions. He designed this literature for a modern media consumer, to be placed on magazines and billboards for easy, speedy access.

Another important part of the context for this new wave was the rapid expansion of SF beyond its literary genre. Science-fiction plots became fashionable on radio and television, culminating in the late 1960s with a new SF cinema that was epitomised by the Stanley Kubrick film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. This broadening context encouraged the writers at *New Worlds* to transcend the SF ghetto and identify with science-fiction producers outside literature, such as film-makers and musicians, but also artists. As a well-known 'science-fiction artist', Paolozzi joined Moorcock's circle and became Ballard's collaborator in 1967. The artist had just unveiled a new style of art that divided critics through its embrace of new materials and cybernetic rhetoric. This included a type of graphics that aspired to an aesthetic equivalent of 'media bombardment'. This work was comparable with Ballard's experimental literature in at least two senses: firstly because it involved a radical combination of text and image, and secondly, it appealed directly to the modern 'writerly reader'.

There has been much speculation about this collaboration, and the likely impact that sharing ideas may have had on the respective productions of both Ballard and Paolozzi. Jeanette Baxter,² for instance, correctly stresses the importance of Surrealism for both men, as a liberatory form of creative dissent; meanwhile Joanne Murray has highlighted the significance of their respective war-time experiences of trauma in the context of 'aftermath culture'.³ Robin Spencer has speculated that Ballard encouraged the artist to pursue his literary ambitions and was probably

² Baxter J., (1988) *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination Spectacular Authorship*, London, Ashgate

³ Joanne Murray, 'Planes Intersect', a paper given to the 2011 conference, Re-Reading Paolozzi at Manchester Metropolitan University

responsible for his decision to increase the production of cut-ups towards the late 1960s.⁴ In his autobiography (Ballard J.G., *Miracles of Life*, Harper Collins, London 2008), Ballard writes warmly about Paolozzi, revealing their mutual interest in art and fascination for the imaginative potential of technology. A joint interview given to *Studio International* in 1971, goes farther suggesting significant areas of convergence in terms of method and attitude. The interviewer, Frank Whitford identified the artistic ground he thought they held in common. "Both are fascinated by technology, by the predicament of the individual in a highly mechanized society, and both explore the way in which certain symbols and images can precipitate complex chain-reactions in the imagination."

The fact is that very little hard evidence has come to light to show how these two great figures collaborated. Both men were, however, associated with Moorcock's circle. Ballard actively promoted his ideas within *New Worlds*, but Paolozzi, by contrast, was largely a figurehead that lent the magazine cultural kudos.

Nevertheless, despite this, he supported the title and relished the opportunity to be associated, in the public eye, with its radical agenda. A distinctive feature of the magazine during this period was its focus on the latest technologies.

Is it possible that the collaborators were somehow engaged in the same project: i.e. the formulation of an aesthetic response to the new technological environment?

This book approaches *New Worlds* for evidence to support that contention. In many

⁴ Spencer R., (2000) *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writings and Interviews*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

ways the magazine represents a unique document of Ballard's context as an experimenter. It reveals, through examples of his fiction and non-fiction, the breadth of his knowledge of art - particularly Surrealism. It shows something of the range of visual art that he (and the *New Worlds* circle) was exposed to: from underground art, Pop Art and Vorticism, to the films of Steve Dwoskin and Andy Warhol and the quirky drawings of Mervyn Peake. The magazine even documents Ballard's activities within the London arts scene. *New Worlds* can also be read for insights into the work and intentions of Paolozzi during his period of artistic renewal. Some things can be discerned from reading articles and prose about the art and artists that writers enjoyed. Artists were important role models for *New Worlds* readers and contributors (works of art and artists' names pepper the fiction). Ballard himself contrasted the success of artists as innovators with the relative failure of writers to stake out an analogous progressive practice. Some artists, notably Warhol, inspired interest as household names. Writers identified with those artists, such as Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton, who shared their themes of the everyday and of man and machine. It is also evident that the magazine was alert to new ideas in art, such as the so-called 'new sensibility'. Its columns record the opinions of theorists and record the views of artists on the uses of technology. Paolozzi won the admiration of Moorcock, among others, because he accepted technology and produced powerful art works that were thought to be analogous to the new SF.

With passing years, magazines become invaluable as repositories of information about their era (the magazine for reading and the ammunition magazine share

common roots in the concept of storage). A careful reading of *New Worlds* points to convergences between Paolozzi's work at this time with the new wave project for 'a new literature' for the new age. It is also possible to understand Ballard's experimental writings within the wider context of his serious interest in art.

For reasons of coherence, the book restricts its purview to the years following the redesign of *New Worlds* in 1967, made possible by an Arts Council grant. During this period Moorcock introduced half-tone reproduction, encouraging a flurry of visual innovation. Soon after the redesign, a surprising diversity of approaches flourished, helping to change the emphasis of the magazine from science fiction to literary experimentation. These events point to an unacknowledged 'visual strand' of the new SF. Was this intended? And is there any connection between this content and Paolozzi's graphics of this period?